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Notes and Opinions.

THE EDUCATIONAL SOLUTION OF RELIGIOUS PROBLEMS.¹

ALMOST every religious problem of today resolves itself into a problem in religious education. This is very obvious, for instance, in the question of the Bible in the public schools, or of the fitting of men for the modern demands of the ministry, or of the continued existence of the Sunday school. It may not be so obvious, but it is just as truly present, in other questions even more serious and fundamental. The question as to the authority of the Bible has become for this age what the question as to the authority of the church was for the time of the Reformation. Literary study of the Bible is making it increasingly difficult for faith in the Bible as a repository of infallible information to persist. How to bring people to see in the real Bible the record of the progress of divine life in the world, and understand that such a record is a far surer aid to faith than any dictated instructions could be, though they were from God himself, is a problem in religious education. The religious problem presented in the remarkable growth of such diverse cults as Mormonism, Dowieism, Spiritualism, and Christian Science, though not by any means unprecedented, is one that is in many of its phases distinctive of this age. If sanity is to prevail in religion over superstition, no matter how subtle or how highly organized, it can do so, in this country and age, only by means of religious education.

In view of the fundamental character of the problem of religious education, it is strange that until within a very few years little, if any, serious and systematic attention has been given to it. Probably because religion has been so generally regarded as something mystical, if not magical, people even of the more thoughtful sort have seemed to be content to treat each religious problem as if it were unrelated to any other, and as well unrelated to the process by which God has brought mankind to its present state—that process which in these days is called evolution, but which may equally well be given the older name of education. It has, however, been evident for some years that

¹ An editorial in the *Outlook* for July 18, 1903, which is here printed in full, with the permission of the publishers, because of its value to the present movement for religious education.

men have been changing in their view of religious life and its problems. No more impressive sign of this change has been given than the sudden rise of the Religious Education Association. The mixture has been in solution; it is now crystallized. The existence of this body, with its already numerous membership representing very different schools of thought and habits of mind, and its extensive organization covering many departments of religious activity, indicates that men of today, however much they may differ in point of view, are ready to unite upon the single proposition that religion can and ought to be made a matter of education. During the meeting of the National Education Association at Boston last week, the officers and other members of the Religious Education Association assembled; a meeting of the Association was appointed for the first to the third of next March at Philadelphia; sixty men, educators, clergymen, journalists, some of national reputation, from as far west as the Rocky Mountains, as far south as Georgia, and of course from the East and Middle West, discussed informally at dinner the character of the work undertaken; and some of the committees already formed conferred regarding specific measures needing immediate attention. But more important than any action taken, or any plans proposed, was the evidence, in the mere fact of the gathering, that out of the chaos is emerging some sign of order.

For the purpose of making clearer the nature of the need which today underlies almost all religious problems, and thus indicating the scope of the work which must be undertaken to supply that need, we point out three distinctions which ought to be kept in mind.

1. The first distinction, familiar to all present-day teachers, but none the less frequently ignored, is that between education and instruction. Instruction is imparting information to a mind, and may be likened to the act of pouring water into a vessel. Education is the guidance of the growth of a mind, and may be likened to the process of cultivating a plant. Instruction may be one part of education, as watering a plant may be a part of the process of cultivating it; but imparting information to a mind may be a means of retarding its development, just as watering a plant may interfere with its growth. It is one and a rather usual thing to give out information on religious subjects; it is another and far rarer thing to draw out the undeveloped religious life. Religious instruction is not the same as religious education.

2. It therefore follows that a distinction must be made between dogma and religion. When we pass beyond instruction into education,

we pass beyond dogma into religion. What is often called religious education has often been nothing more than instruction in dogma. How dogmas may best be conveyed may be discussed and settled, and yet the subject of education in religion remain untouched. What the rules of Greek grammar are to the literary instinct, the dogmas of theology are to religion. The teacher can hammer rules into the boy's head; but the literary instinct he has to develop out of the boy's mind. Dogmas can be conveyed by instruction; but religion must be developed by education.

3. A distinction likewise follows between religion and feeling. If religion can be made the subject of education, it may yet be emotional, but it must be more than emotion. One may be intensely emotional and remain uneducated. A plant that bears flowers but no fruit is not a developed plant. The deepening of religious experience has often been supposed to be religious education. But religious education is more than the deepening of religious experience. It may include instruction in dogma; it may include the deepening of experience; but if it is real education, it must be concerned primarily with the development of the complete life.

This is the problem that is peculiarly the religious problem of this day and land. A democracy must seek for the solution of its religious problems, like that of its political and social problems, in education. Only as religious education, as distinct from dogmatic instruction on the one hand and cultivation of the emotions on the other, is achieved will the religious questions of the age, even such pressing ones as those concerning the authority of the Bible, the overcoming of superstition, and the union of the church, find answer.